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ABSTRACT

In 1985-86, Kalamazoo College participated in a project to promote student transfer from two-year colleges. Among the accomplishments of the project were the preparation of a general transfer student brochure addressing issues of admissions, financial aid, credit transfer, and academic advising; the distribution of a quick reference sheet stating transfer and credit policies to all admissions counselors at Kalamazoo Valley Community College; the development of a special application for transfer admission; the institution of a new policy whereby transfer applicants receive information on degree requirements and a written evaluation of their transcripts; and the establishment of closer contacts between Kalamazoo College's Transfer Coordinator and local community colleges. Other projects, currently in progress, include research on the educational backgrounds of transfer students and the development of a special transfer student orientation program. Several characteristics of Kalamazoo College have limited its ability to enroll large numbers of two-year college transfer students, including its selective admissions policies, the high costs of attending the college, its unique school calendar, and the negative attitude held by some members of the faculty and administrative staff regarding transfer students. On the other hand, features such as the small size of the college, its fine academic reputation, its system of academic advising, and full presidential support have facilitated Kalamazoo's efforts to recruit two-year college transfer students. (EJV)

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JC 860 292

KALAMAZOO COLLEGE

FINAL REPORT ON PARTICIPATION IN AAC/MELLON TRANSFER PROJECT

We are very grateful for the opportunity to participate in the AAC/Mellon Two-Year College Transfer Project. At the very least, it has provided us the impetus to systematically examine two-year colleges as a source for potential students--something we'd never done before. Our participation has also sparked the initiation of a real effort to actively recruit students from two-year colleges. We are pleased with what we've accomplished thus far, and excited about our plans for the continuation of this effort; we'd like to outline both for you here.

PROJECTS COMPLETED

1. A general transfer student brochure was prepared, addressing questions of admissions, financial aid, credit transfer, academic advising, etc. The brochure features an insert for 2-year college prospects outlining the special opportunities available for them. This piece has been sent to all of our 1986 transfer prospects, and has served to clear up a lot of "nuts-and-bolts" questions very early in the admissions process. We suspect that this will have a positive impact on our yield figures for fall (students will have a far clearer notion of what Kalamazoo College is about before they even apply), though hard data on this is still unavailable.

2. A quick reference sheet has been forwarded to all admissions counselors at Kalamazoo Valley Community College (KVCC) for their use as they work with students interested in a possible transfer to Kalamazoo. It states our general policies with regard to transfer and credit matters, as well as the names and telephone numbers of resource persons on our campus (Director of Financial Aid, Dean of Students, etc.). Our colleagues at KVCC have expressed their appreciation for such a guide, so we will expand its use to include counselors at other Michigan community colleges next year.

3. A special application for transfer admission has been prepared for use beginning next fall. Not only will it assist us in more efficiently and effectively assessing a transfer student's suitability for admission, but it should also reinforce the notion that a)transfer students are different from prospective freshmen and that we as an institution recognize this, and b)we welcome this diversity, and them!

4. Transfer student credit evaluations and academic advising are performed by our Registrar. In the past, students were not informed of the results of their credit evaluations or of many degree requirements until they arrived on campus. Our

Registrar has agreed to allow the Transfer Coordinator to perform preliminary credit evaluations--now transfer students receive, in writing, information on all degree requirements and the results of their transcript evaluations within two weeks of their acceptance for admission. We feel that the knowledge of exactly where they stand will enhance their ability to choose to enroll at Kalamazoo, and should eliminate the possibility of "unpleasant surprises" once they arrive.

5. Our Transfer Coordinator requested, and received, an invitation to attend a meeting of the admissions staff at KVCC. The registrar and director of financial aid at KVCC were also in attendance. This meeting enabled us to gain a clear understanding of their needs, and their procedures as they counsel students who wish to attend a 4-year college. It also allowed them the opportunity to learn more about what we have to offer their students. We feel that some privately-held myths were exploded on both sides, and expect that a far closer working relationship between our two offices will be the result.

6. Our Transfer Coordinator attended "Private College Day" programs at three Michigan community colleges this winter. While student interest in private colleges seemed minimal, the programs were an opportunity to meet the community college transfer coordinator, and to establish our presence at those schools.

7. KVCC faculty in the Economics/Business Administration Department and the Social Sciences Division were invited to our campus to hear one or both of the guest lectures visiting our campus the week of June 2. A reception was held after each lecture, providing an opportunity to meet and talk with their faculty counterparts at "K". Turnout on the part of KVCC faculty was quite disappointing, but those who attended felt the program worthwhile, as did our faculty. We would like to try this again with another faculty group (sciences)--perhaps in the fall when KVCC is in full session.

PROJECTS IN PROGRESS

1. Research is under way to study the educational origins of students transferring to Kalamazoo College over the past ten years: institution attended, GPA upon transfer, academic program pursued, etc. We also hope to learn more about their performance once here--GPA, major selected, percentage graduating--so as to tailor our recruiting efforts to best fit their needs and academic goals. It will be interesting to compare the results of this study with what we already know about students who come to us as freshmen.

2. Our Registrar, Dean of Students, and Transfer Coordinator are involved in the development of a special transfer student orientation program for use this fall. In the past, transfer

students have had the opportunity to participate in freshman orientation. Most chose not to do so, hence their introduction to the College consisted of a quick tour of the library and a brief meeting with their academic advisor (the Registrar) before registering for classes. Obviously, more needs to be done! Some of our ideas include allowing more time for thorough academic advising, matching each new transfer student with a current transfer student mentor who has come to us from a similar type of institution, and more opportunities for "socializing", both with each other and with returning upperclassmen.

PROJECTS TO COME

1. We plan to continue our effort to persuade our Registrar of the need for a course equivalency guide for KVCC. Monies from the AAC/Mellon Grant will enable her to hire someone (faculty member, upperclassman) to assist her with this project once she agrees.

2. Kalamazoo College belongs to a consortium of local educational institutions of which KVCC is also a member. Through this consortium, students enrolled at one of the participating schools may take courses at any of the other four, paying their own institution's fees. Differences in academic calendar and the manner in which credit is expressed between Kalamazoo College and KVCC make arranging this exchange a little tricky. Nonetheless, we plan to publicize its availability to faculty and students at KVCC to encourage its use. We feel that it could provide KVCC students the opportunity to have a "trial run" at Kalamazoo with little risk, and encourage them to consider us as an option.

3. Next year, we plan to expand our efforts to include three other community colleges--Grand Rapids Junior College, Lansing Community College, and Kellogg Community College. These seem like natural markets, as we've enrolled students from each of these schools in the past. The latter two have special honors programs for their top students, hence allowing us to begin with a clear target group. Meetings with the admissions staffs at each school as well as recruitment visits are being planned.

4. Beginning this summer, we plan to identify and approach transfer students already enrolled at Kalamazoo who would be willing to work with the Transfer Coordinator in recruiting community college students. Their role may be that of mentor (see #2, Projects in Progress), or they might choose to help by hosting transfer prospects for overnight visits, having lunch with them after their admissions interviews, or calling to congratulate them upon their acceptance.

5. We will continue our efforts at "attitude adjustment" of certain faculty and our Registrar (see "Obstacles" below). Hopefully, our research data will indicate that transfer students from

community colleges perform as well as their counterparts from 4-year schools, or as those students who come to us as freshmen. We hope too, that the KVCC faculty visitation programs will apprise them of the quality of the faculty and programs at our sister institution.

ASSETS AND LIABILITIES

In assessing the conditions at Kalamazoo College which facilitate and hinder our recruitment of 2-year college transfer students, we are struck by how often the phrase "a double-edged sword" seems to apply. Many of our greatest strengths as an institution cause our most difficult problems; some of our weaknesses are the unfortunate consequences of qualities that make us special.

First, the obstacles. Kalamazoo is a selective college. Our freshmen have test scores and high school grades that place them in the top quartile of college-bound students nationally. While not as much emphasis is placed on those criteria for incoming transfer students, they must come to us with comparable qualifications. No programs exist for the student who, while very talented in one academic area, needs help to acquire basic skills in another. This selectivity limits our market for prospective freshmen; it is unrealistic to expect it to function any differently for students from 2-year colleges. A related problem is that this selectivity is often "self-imposed", especially within the state of Michigan, and most definitely, within our local community. Bright students who would probably do very well at Kalamazoo are intimidated by our reputation, and never apply for admission. Counselors, teachers, and parents often reinforce this notion. Accompanying it is the idea that faculty and students at Kalamazoo are dogged "intellectuals", unconcerned with the outside world and hostile to those who don't "measure up".

Another liability is the competitive nature of the education market in the city of Kalamazoo. Within a ten-minute drive of our campus is a large state university and a non-selective liberal arts college which have mounted a massive effort to recruit the older, part-time, vocational, and/or non-traditional student. It is more convenient and less expensive for a KVCC student to complete a bachelor's degree at Western Michigan University or Nazareth College than at Kalamazoo College. Hence, most of them choose to do so.

Relative to other institutions in our market, Kalamazoo College is very expensive. While the majority of our student body receives some form of financial assistance, it is difficult to convince a 2-year college student--who is often uninformed of the financial aid process--that he or she can afford the cost of private education. Once students express an interest in Kalamazoo, we inundate them with information on financial aid, but we fear our price tag functions in the same way as our reputation--students dismiss us as prohibitively expensive before they even inquire about the possibilities for help.

Another feature of Kalamazoo College that limits our ability to enroll large numbers of 2-year college transfer students is our unique calendar. We employ a unit system of credit, academic quarters, and are in full operation year-round. Our students also spend a significant portion of their education off campus--both overseas and at various research and corporate institutions around the country. While most of those off-campus experiences are optional, they are an integral part of what Kalamazoo has to offer. A student who has no interest in them or whose personal circumstances make participation difficult is unlikely to find Kalamazoo attractive.

The most disturbing obstacle we've faced in our attempts to enlist institutuional support for our efforts is the negative attitude held by some members of our faculty and academic administration regarding transfer students from 2-year colleges. These students are viewed as being underprepared for the academic challenge they'll encounter here. Non-traditional (e.g., part-time, non-resident) students are regarded as not contributing to the College community. Hopefully, the results of our research will prove to these individuals that these students have been successful here. We in Admissions attempt to prepare and support our 2-year college transfers as best we can.

But there is much to encourage us as well. We have found our size to be of tremendous advantage, allowing us to have personal contact with our colleagues at 2-year institutions and the students we wish to recruit. The relatively small bureaucracy in place here enables us to address concerns personally, and to be somewhat flexible in terms of admissions requirements, transfer of credits, and other regulations. Working with a relatively small number of transfer students each year enables us to tailor our recruitment efforts to suit individual needs. We get to know each transfer student fairly well by the time he or she arrives, and most have been quite forthcoming in telling us how well we've done our jobs. Many of the most successful projects performed in connection with the Grant--transfer brochure, special application for admission, transfer orientation--are the result of current transfer students telling us what they want!

Another type of effort that has helped us considerably is the development of information materials specifically for transfer students and 2-year college advisors. The transfer brochure, counselor advising sheet, and timely credit evaluation and academic requirement information have been enthusiastically received.

While a fine academic reputation may intimidate certain students, it is a tremendous draw for those with the talent and desire for a challenging education. Consequently, little "weeding out" needs to be done; we were able to offer admission to approximately seventy-five percent of the 2-year college students who applied last year.

Our system of academic advising has been designed to facilitate the success of all of our students, but works especially well for transfers.

Our Registrar serves as their advisor for the first quarter in residence, and together, they devise a tentative plan for the student's entire career at Kalamazoo. The student then has the option of changing to an advisor in his or her academic major. Communication between a student's professors and academic advisor is quite thorough; students in trouble academically are identified early, and intervention (talking with the student, arranging for tutoring, etc.) is begun immediately.

In our efforts to recruit students from 2-year colleges, we have enjoyed outstanding support from our President and his counterpart at KVCC. While that support needs to "trickle down" a little further at Kalamazoo, we appreciate their help. While much remains to be done, we are encouraged by its beginning.

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